

114 It can be said that from the time of the Conquest such information as we have about the Indians in their ramifications and languages we owe to the Missionary Fathers. Any attempt to write about these Indians whom the Spaniards found on our continent really has to take very specially into account the writings of these meritorious soldiers of Christ.

101 "The Matacos are also known by the names Mataguayos,
131 Notenes, Vejoses, Ocoles, Malbalas, Chunupis (1) and others, accord-

1. Not to be confused with the Chunupi-Vilelas.

ing to location. All of them with only slight differences speak the same language and their customs are practically identical. They occupy the western part of central and southern Chaco, principally both banks of the Bermejo River and the right bank of the Pilcomayo." [599]

[161] "The number of these Indians is probably about 20,000. Some
184 of them already have dealings with the frontier Christians, among
648 whom they spend some time each year, working on their ranches; while others live in complete isolation from the whites, whom they regard as their enemies, and not without reason, especially the Argentines who for some years now have been systematically ousting them from their lands, persecuting and exterminating them. It is probable then that within a few years the Matacos will have undergone great changes in their manner of living and will have diminished in number. Be that as it may the present day Matacos are still constituents of quite a large tribe which is different in some respects from the others.

[142] The Mataco is of middling stature, somewhat slim and of a
181 dark coppery color; apathetic in nature, reserved and wary, his glance reflects suspicion and treachery. His manners are boorish and his person and physiognomy vile and repulsive. He is a thief by instinct and he also steals because he considers it his duty. He is long-suffering and warlike, lazy and dirty in habit and innately cowardly and vengeful. The individual members of the neighboring tribes are characterized by a mental alertness which, though untutored is there for all to see. Not so the Matacos, who are mentally sluggish and to whom one cannot even attribute astuteness, in spite of their being sneak thieves. They are admired by all for the apparent lack of feeling with which they endure insults and also for the cold-bloodedness with which they will stab an enemy or allow themselves to be stabbed."

114 It is strange that in the last two reports so much importance has been given to the Noctén tribes about which nothing is said by authors writing in colonial times. This in itself already tends to favor the hypothesis that the Noctenes may be the Tonocotés.

In this part of the continent it does not seem that there occurred that veritable extermination of whole tribes, such as was the case with the Charruas in Uruguay and we must therefore search about somewhere for the 60,000 and more Indians who understood or spoke the Tonocoté language. Among them were the Mataguayos, who exist down to the present day; it would be only natural, then, to affirm that Mataguayo is a dialect of Tonocoté, and since Noctén and Mataguayo are closely related dialects, it follows that Noctén is as much a dialect of Tonocoté as is Mataguayo.

In the following chapter I shall set forth a report which was sent to me by Father Eliseo Molina of the Franciscan College at Tarija. [609]

XIX

What Father Doroteo Giannecchini has to Say Regarding the Noctenes and Other Mataco Tribes

101 "The Noctenes, Matacos, Vejosos, Guiznaes, and Chulupies belong to one single nation, for all speak the same language and have the same customs."

184 "Such nations are differentiated by their name and by traits which I shall call provincial or local."

101 "Our Noctenes, for example, who are the ones who inhabit the country between the foot of the Pisapo mountain range and Pikírenda, 50
● 131 or 60 leagues to the east, are called Noctenes. In the vicinity of Pikírenda they take the name of Guiznaes; but they are of the same family as our Noctenes and are even related to them by blood."

"From Pikírenda onwards, some 30 leagues, more or less, and up to the Paraguay River they take the name of Chulupies; and along the whole right bank of the Pilcomayo River, from our first Noctén mission on to the Paraguay River, it is the same tribe: their

101 speech and customs are somewhat different, but in substance it is the
 191 same language, and they understand each other perfectly when each speaks in his own way."

"Across from the Colonia Crevaux, on the left bank towards the north there is another tribe called Chorotis which must originally have been a group captured by the Noctenes for their language is a true Mataco or Noctén dialect and many words are identical with Noctén words."

"It is true that these Chorotis live as unto themselves forming a separate tribe, but they are related to and have continual dealings with the Noctenes. Their pronunciation is, however, much clearer and more intelligible than that of the Noctenes."

"These same Noctenes are related to the Matacos of Oran and the Chaco, in which place the Noctenes are called Matacos, and the Matacos living between the left bank of the Oran River and the reservation in which we had a mission at the beginning of this century, take the name of Vejoses, and have their own local way of speaking the same language as the Noctenes and Matacos. Higher up, that is in our Bolivian Itiyuro, they again take the name of Matacos." [610]

[197] "The fact is then that they do not have what might be called a separate language--rather do they vary the pronunciation of certain terms which does not constitute a separate language but a local variation, as happens with the Spanish of Bolivians, Argentines, Chilians, etc., and between town and town, region and region."

This description was sent to me when I asked for a Pater-noster in Mataguay, having already received one in Noctén.

114 All that has been transcribed in the previous chapters shows that in the opinion of the missionary fathers the typical tribe was the Noctén, and that this is the name they use where we would say Matacos and Mataguayos. It is to be understood, then, that Noctén is nothing but a corruption of the name Tonocoté or Toconoté, already mentioned.

XX

Geographic Distribution of Mataco-type Nations

101 From all that has been told us by the Fathers of the Company
 191 and of the Franciscan Missions it can be deduced that the Mataco tribes occupy a diagonal region which in times past extended from the basin

(10/ of the Salado (1) River to the Pilcomayo, hemmed in towards the

13/

1. From Matará northwards.

mountains by tribes of Quichua influence and others, and in the direction of the Río de la Plata by nations of the Toba-Guaycurú type. This vast region was bounded on the north by Chiriguano territory, and on the south by the Quichuas and Pampas of the Guaycurú-Querandí type.

It appears at present that the basin of the Salado River ceased (17/ to be territory of the nomad Matacos who, in the past century, were replaced by the Mocovíes and other tribes of a more definite Guaycurú type. Lozano in his first volume and on page 175 (Lamas Ed.) says that "gasta" means town in the Tonocoté language. This being the case these tribes must have entered the valleys of Yocavil and Londres also, for all the Andean region is full of places whose names end in "gasta" (2). According to my observations "gasta" is as Cacán a word

2. In none of the Mataco-Mataguayano dialects does the term "gasta" appear.

as is "ao."

In any case one thing must needs be conceded and that is that the Mataco tribes had shifted towards the southwest up to the Aconquija range. [611]

22/ The Matacos, like the Tobas and other Guaycurú nations are and were nomads, and of course one cannot indicate exactly the areas frequented by them when they were on the move; at one time they would go in one direction, at another in another, according to pressure from more warlike tribes or from the Spaniards.

22/ All agree that after the Spanish conquest numerous tribes of 174 Matacos or Tonocotés withdrew towards the Pilcomayo River basin and this is exactly what would have been expected because there they were less exposed to Spanish raiders who would carry off any Indian they found to forced labor; these they used to call piezas "pieces of ordinance"--Translator].

Bulletin of the
Argentine Geographic Institute

Volume XVIII

[173] The Mataco Indians and their Language

by
Juan Pelleschi
Civil Engineer

PART ONE

Chapter I

Geographic Situation

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The Matacos are hemmed in on the West by the Salta border line and on the East by the Toba frontier. Caught thus between two enemies, they have of necessity formed alliances, the Eastern Matacos with the Tobas and the Western Matacos with the white colonists, each group warring upon the other. In spite of this division the Matacos hold to their common language jealously, although it is true that there are slight dialectal differences to be noted. Thus, for example, the Eastern Matacos almost invariably say "quia" and "tza" where their Western counterparts would say "cha," regardless of the fact that any one of these expressions is employed without difficulty by members of the same tribe. The same happens with "quio," "tzo," "cho"; for example: "doe" can be "tzonaj," "quionaj."

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Each nation of Indians has its own territory and will go to war over the smallest patch of land just as we would. The land is also subdivided among the tribes of one nation and these may not overstep their bounds without causing war. These wars are very frequent for the many reasons set down elsewhere and because of the marauding spirit which dominates the Indians -- thus it is that whenever they learn that a tribe [174] has become rich, for one reason or another, in animals or

Introduction.

The vast alluvial lowland commonly known under the name of *El Gran Chaco*, is situated in the heart of South America, being bounded in the east by the rivers Paraguay and Paraná, in the west by the eastern cordilleras of the Bolivian Andes, and in the north and south approximately by latitudes 20° and 30° South respectively. Politically this territory is divided between the republics Argentine, Paraguay, and Bolivia, but the boundaries between Paraguay and Bolivia have long been uncertain owing to the fact that the interior parts of the Chaco are still very little known and practically no-man's land. In fact, northern Chaco has up till now remained a white spot on the map of South America. The very name of Chaco has been much disputed, but this question may now be regarded as definitely settled. Chaco is a Spanish form of the Quichua name *chaca*, 'hunting', 'chase'. The word has reference to the great hunting expeditions which, as we know, were annually arranged by the Incas, and on which thousands of Indians were employed as drivers. The name *chacu* was later applied to the Indians who devoted themselves to this kind of chase, as well as to the tracts where these hunts took place.¹⁾ The Incas, of course, only knew a small part of the immense territory which is now called Chaco, more strictly speaking the forest-clad slopes of the eastern cordilleras as well as the adjacent plains, regions which formerly were and in parts still are extremely rich in all kinds of game. The interior regions, particularly east of Pilcomayo, inhabited by savage Indians, were unknown to the Incas and were not explored until our own days.

The climate in the Gran Chaco is on the whole subtropical, but subject to great variations, a fact that accounts for the different character of the vegetation in different parts of the country. In the west, where

¹⁾ See Enrique de Gandia, *Historia del Gran Chaco*. Madrid, 1930, pp. 7 sqq.

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MAP of the Gran Chaco

Broad black line shows the author's route.

CHACO
BOREAL
(Unexplored)

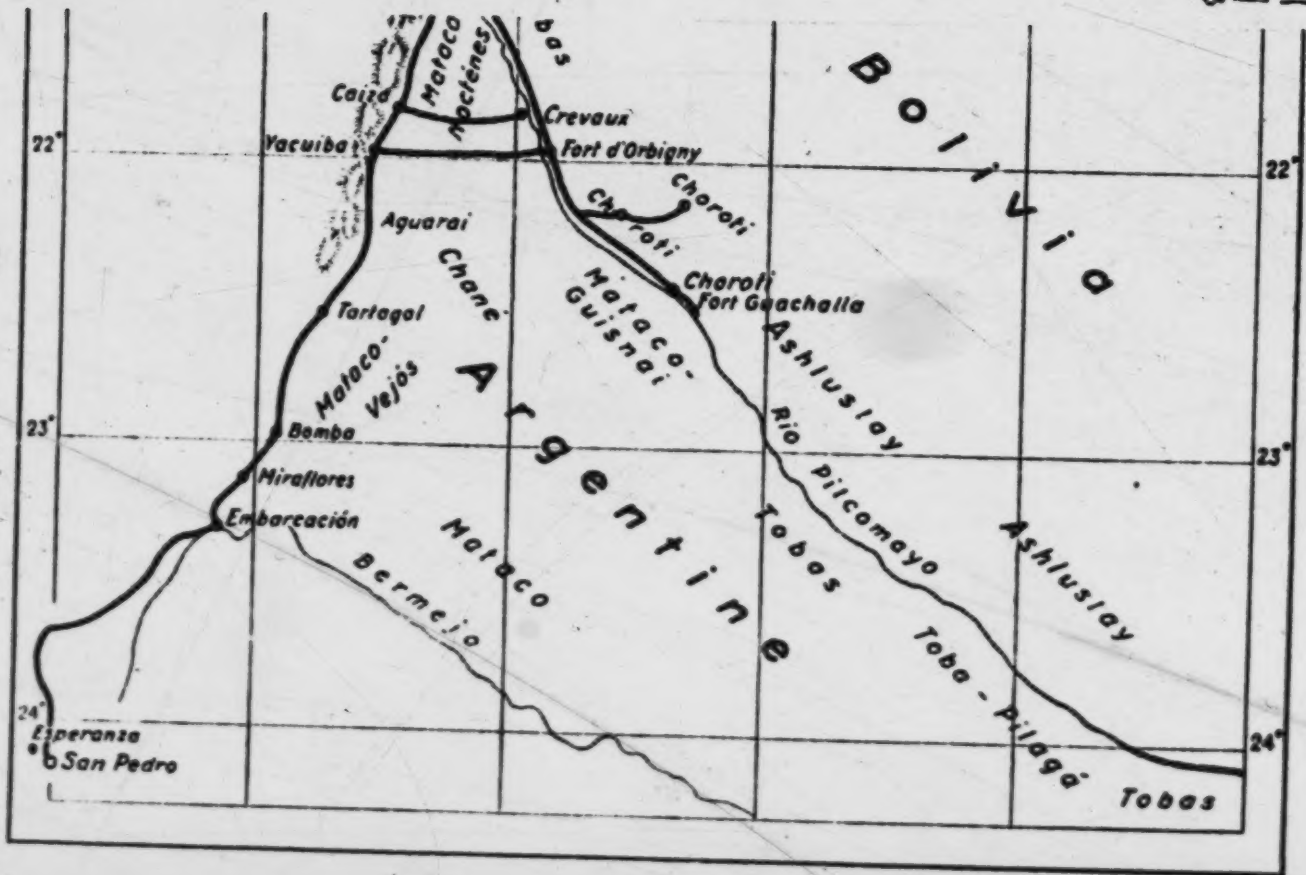
Z: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913) 1932 SIT Mamaco SIT



[End Map(A)]

2: Karetan E-5 (1911-1913) 1932 SIT Mataco SIT

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[End Map(B)]

Mataco Marriage

By NIELS FOCK

This paper was written on a field trip to the Mataco, carried out under the auspices of the Fundación Williams, Argentina with support from the Danish State Research Foundation. I wish to express my hearty thanks to these institutions, and particular thanks to my professor, Dr. Kaj Birket-Smith, who has supported the expedition both scientifically and morally.

The Mataco Indians inhabit the western areas of the Argentine Chaco between the Rio Pilcomayo and the Rio Bermejo. They have for centuries been in contact with civilisation, but as a frontier tribe they seem to have built up a special traditionalism as a protective bulwark. Particularly the north-eastern Mataco at the central Pilcomayo have preserved their ancient traditions to this day, and the occupational system is still stamped by the collecting by women and the fishing of the men. The customs in connexion with marriage have to a large extent been retained unaffected to the present day, evincing many primitive features as, for example, the lack of any form of wedding ceremony. The contraction of marriage extends over a period dating from the girl's initiation until her first confinement.

The Mataco regard the initiation of girls as an introduction to marriage. This initiation consists in the girl's seclusion—or better—segregation from everyone apart from her mother. It comes as a prolongation of her first menstruation, and the long isolation is spent in continual work making *caragualla* cord. It is considered very important that this work should be performed rapidly and well in order that an impression can be formed of the girl's ability as regards her main occupation in the future. As a rule the end of seclusion is marked by an *aloja* festival during which the girl looks around for a man. That same night she is able to take him with her to her home and allow him to sleep with her.

The girl being initiated is then called *awata*; sexually and economically she is now ready for marriage. Normally several years will pass during which the girl may well search for a husband, but the actual result of her efforts is a series of sexual relations that seldom endure beyond a few days. It is nearly always the girl who takes the initiative for these short term adventures. At the village dancing-place where every evening the young men dance in chains or rings, the girls also

Mataco SI 7
Toba SI 12

/319/

Matacos or Noctenes

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This tribe is also very numerous; it lives on the right bank of the Pilcomayo River, occupying the part opposite the zone occupied by the Toba, with whom they maintain friendly relations which are disturbed from time to time, especially at the time when the algarobas and other fruits ripen.

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A group of these Indians in times past formed a part of the San Antonio del Pilcomayo Mission, where today the Chaco Delegation is located, occupying the mission buildings. But because they are as fickle, or perhaps more so, than the Toba, Religion and the State could make little progress with such Indians.

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These Indians are very numerous and in small groups extend as far as the shores of the Bermejo; their language is totally different from that of the other tribes and they hardly mix, although they maintain friendly relations with the Toba, to whom they are considered to be inferior.

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Their physiognomy is overly languid; sadness can be read in their faces, and they are very miserable; nevertheless they are ferocious in war, in jealousy, or in a state of drunkenness; they injure and kill one another. Out of these considerations the women refrain from drinking to the state of inebriation in order to prevent their husbands' disorders and to hide the weapons in the event of the outbreaks which frequently occur (1).

M
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[77]M
[243]

1. In the drinking bouts they are the same as the Toba; they make a mead from the fruits of the algaroba, which is almost as intoxicating as brandy; they also make mead from other wild fruits; they do not make chicha because they hardly plant maize.

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They are more peaceful Indians than the Toba, are not very warlike, and do not attack the houses of the whites but profit when they can from the latter's cattle, especially should a famine break out due to a lack of wild fruits.

Choroti SK6
Mataco SI7
Güisnáis

Ci /321 cont./

301 Doubtless through being very close to the Toba, they
 302 pierce their ear lobes, in which they put pieces of wood, and
 171 they also stain their faces.

Ci
 648 In the expeditions to the Paraguay they have never shown
 [464] themselves to be hostile to the whites and soldiers; rather they
 have lent important services and it was they who saved the life
 of Señor Touvar and his companions when they became separated
 from the expedition. Therefore the reduction of these Indians
 to civilized life would be very profitable.

Güisnáis

M
 131 These Indians occupy the western bank of the Pilcomayo
 101 facing the Choroti Indians and southwest of the region occupied
 by the Mataco. The geographic degree of their territory, with
 a very slight difference, is the same as that of the Choroti,
 since they are separated from the latter only by the river bed.

M
 101 They are a division of the Mataco; they speak the latter's
 181 language with very little difference; their customs are nearly
 241 identical and their number quite small. They are of a peaceful
 231 nature like the Choroti, and like them, they plant gourds and
 197 other vegetables. They also devote themselves to the raising of
 domestic animals, such as cows, horses, sheep, goats, and
 chickens.

M
 167 Even the Güisnáis frequently come out for jobs in the
 177 Argentine Republic, from where they also bring back weapons,
 464 in order to use them particularly in the woods, killing birds, wild
 224 boars, deer, and other quadrupeds.

M
 174 They have more religious ideas than other tribes, and it
 771 seems that their great-grandparents might have belonged to
 776 some former Argentine mission, because, more than others, they
 [756] recognize a true divinity. /322/ Nonetheless in their great
 ignorance they confuse ideas, and in great fear they recognize in
 sorcerers a power that they do not have.

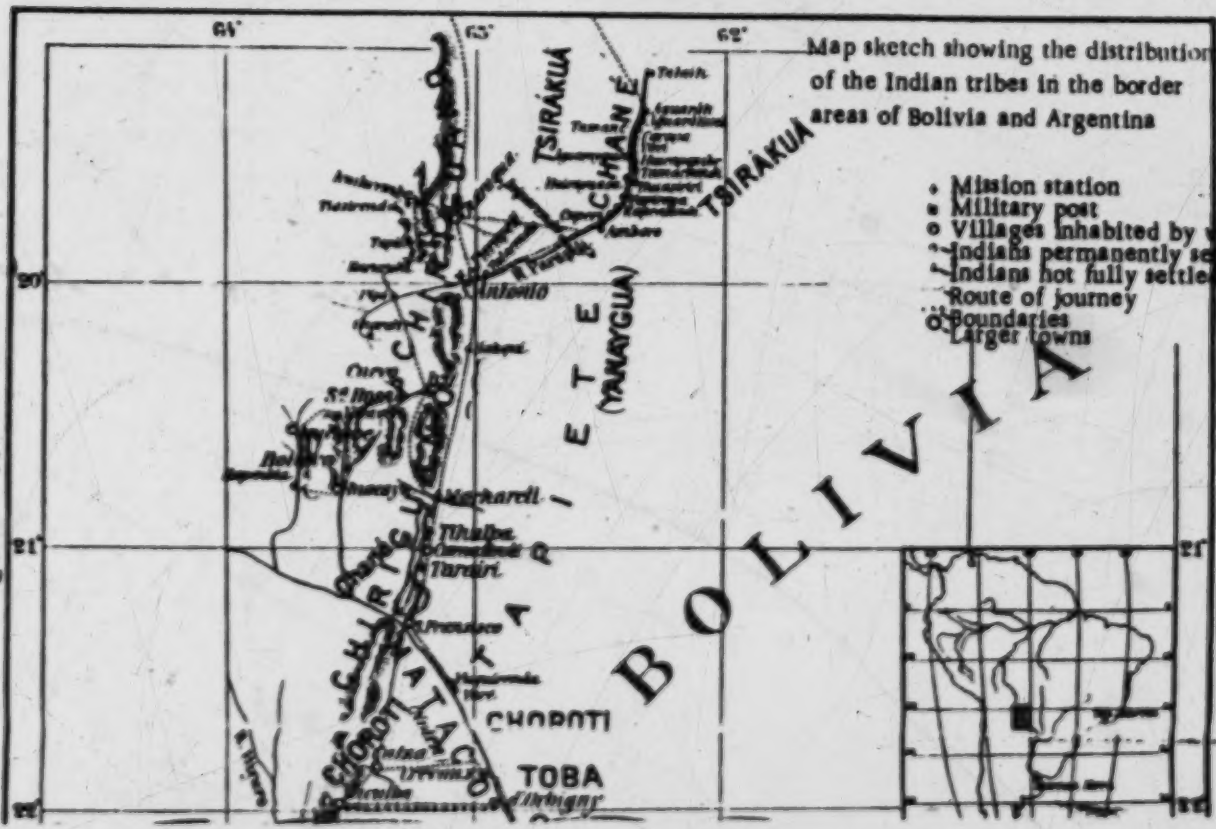
Ce
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6: Nordenföld--156 E-5 (1908-1909) 1912 SF10 Chiriguano SF10

Mataco IT7
Chaco's SK6
Chane's SF8

Map sketch showing the distribution of the Indian tribes in the border areas of Bolivia and Argentina

- Mission station
- Military post
- Villages inhabited by whites
- Indians permanently settled
- Indians not fully settled
- Route of journey
- Boundaries
- Larger towns



[End Map, (A)]

E: Nordenskiöld - 157 E-5 (1908-1909) 1912 SFIO Chiriguano SFIC
NATACOSTI 70
Choroti SK6
Chane JFS8



2: Métraux E-4 (no date) 1946

S14 Abipon S14
Potato S17

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[Facing p. 198(B)]

